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this "image, reflection, creation," has come. There is the Idea in identity, as universal, not only, but Idea of idea with a higher standing, reflecting itself into the universal; and in this Idea of idea there is "the union of life, knowledge, and will, in perfection." But the dialectical thinking-process does not attain this highest principle, for that completed itself in circling within itself in the judgment of the universal. If thinking in judgments be all our knowing, then we can only stand in the universal and presuppose this Idea of all ideas because we need it, yet cannot verify it, and so we have but a supposititious Deity. To know this living, wise, free, personal God of the universe, we must use a knowing higher than thinking in abstract judgments, and take the faculty of Reason instead of the Understanding, which may in the universal infallibly see the prerequisite, that this personal God should be or this universe could not be; and that if He be, the universe must be in order that reason may be satisfied; and in such conditioned result can also see that God made and manages the universe from design and for a purpose. Without Reason validly to *require*, we can only wistfully suppose, a personal living God, with no capability to confirm the supposition.

5. *The Conclusion.*—The attempt to speculate is vain by abstract thinking alone. Speculation seeks an ultimate, and no abstract thinking can reach it. As already seen in the category of the universal, thinking can presuppose but cannot verify; so also is it helpless in all categories. In that of quantity, its greatest may have greater and its least may have less. For it, all wholes are limited, and neither the simple limit nor the unlimited can be thought. It may seek to make the polygon coincide with the circle by multiplying its sides and so diminishing their length; but the ultimate is never reached, for its last is still a limited, and may be less. It may presuppose the coincidence in some way to be made, but thinking cannot verify it.

On the other hand, reason sees that a circle can be described touching the mid-points of the sides of any polygon, and that its circumference is a limit and not a limited, and that the multiplying and so shortening the sides of the polygon may bring a coincidence and the polygon be lost in the circle. It is prerequisite *à priori* that the polygonal sides coincide with the points through the circle's circumference; if not, the ultimate cannot be; if so, the ultimate must be; and when so put, it must have been by design. The reason comprehends the whole case, and what before was unverified presupposition has become an exactly known prerequisite. Abstract thinking must run into absurdities and contradictions, if it be set alone to solve the problems of reason.

Most respectfully yours,

Amherst, Mass., Aug. 10, 1875.

L. P. HICKOK.

Note by the Editor.—Our continuation of the discussion of this important theme is deferred for want of space in this number.—ED.

Professor Davidson and Professor Vera.

In our January number we gave the substance of a letter of Professor Vera of Naples in reply to certain strictures of Professor Davidson in a previous number upon his "*Strauss et l'ancienne et la nouvelle foi.*" Early

in the year Professor Davidson sent us a few comments on the letter in question, which should have appeared in the April number. After answering Professor Vera's question in regard to one philosophy's being the only true philosophy, he says:

"To the remark of mine that Strauss is not bound to accept the principles of Hegel," Prof. Vera replies: "Now Mr. D. says that Dr. Strauss is not bound to accept the principles of the Hegelian philosophy, and that I have no right to criticize him from the Hegelian point of view and with arguments founded on the Hegelian doctrine. But what are we to understand by *not being bound*? Of course, a madman is not bound as a madman to admit reason, or an obdurate criminal to listen to the judge's arguments. But in our case the contest is between reason and reason, so that I as Hegelian not only have a right but am bound to demonstrate to Strauss, on the strength of the Hegelian philosophy, that he is in error, and that his doctrine is false and untenable; and Strauss is bound to submit to the demonstration, if the demonstration be a rational one." The important point in all this is the final reservation—"if the demonstration be a rational one." Exactly: but who is to be judge whether the demonstration be a rational one or not—Strauss or Vera? We need not doubt what Prof. Vera's answer would be. A man thinking himself in possession of the only true philosophy can hardly help assuming the attitude of a pope and declaring himself infallible. Professor Vera appeals to his book as a proof that he has refuted the positions of Strauss. Now, I appeal to the same book in proof that he has done no such thing. At best, he has only shown that Strauss's principles are not in conformity with what he (Vera) understands to be the principles of Hegel—which is a very different thing."

He continues:

"Professor Vera's next comment is upon the passage in which I had said: 'Although we are not among those who deny all validity to religion—it has, of course, its value and its proper place in the hearts of those who cannot ascend to a philosophical point of view—still we assert that religion, as such, can never be absolute either virtually or otherwise, and that in proportion as it becomes philosophical, that is, as it approaches the Absolute, it ceases to be religion and becomes philosophy.' Thus on this point we are entirely at one with Strauss, who, in our opinion, does nothing more than combat, in the interest of philosophy, a religion which has become obstructive to progress, and, therefore, worse than useless. This does not mean that we approve of the philosophy which Strauss would substitute for Christianity: very far from it."

"Professor Vera says: 'Scientifically and rationally speaking, no one has a right to reject a doctrine unless he is prepared to show that he is in possession of a better and more rational one.' What the only real philosophy may understand by the words 'scientifically and rationally speaking' I do not profess to know; but I do know that the rest of the statement is untrue. Strauss was doubtless prepared to show, and did show, to a good many people that he was in possession of a better and more rational doctrine than the one he rejected. He did not show it to Prof. Vera, and therein lay his shortcoming. But had he not been prepared to show it to any one, or even to himself, he had a perfect right to reject a doctrine which he felt to be untrue, although he had not known of any other at all. As a great poet says:

'There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.'

Utter unbelief is often a very healthy condition. Descartes, of whom the founder of the only 'real philosophy' highly approves, began with the maxim '*De omnibus dubitandum est.*'"

He next discusses the assertion of Professor Vera that Religion has no value unless also for philosophers, holding his conclusion to be a *non sequitur*. He then reviews the position: "Now if religion rests on no principle, on no necessity, on no truth, it has no value whatever either for the philosopher or any one else." * * * "But if it rest on truth, this must be an absolute truth—a remark which applies to truth in general, but more particularly to religion, *whose object is God, the absolute truth.*"

"If Prof. Vera means to insinuate that I imagine religion to rest on no principle, no necessity, no truth, I beg to say that such insinuation is both groundless and malicious. Religion rests, in the last analysis, upon the absolute truth, and has a value for many people quite different from that which it has for the philosopher as such. And when I say the absolute truth, I mean what I say. The absolute truth excludes the notion of an absolute truth and of absolute truths. There is but one absolute truth, the Absolute Truth, which I have no objection to calling God. Professor Vera is of quite a different opinion. Besides the Absolute Truth, he knows any number of absolute truths; indeed he holds all truths to be absolute. He cannot, therefore, complain, if, wherever he says 'truth' or 'truths,' I substitute 'absolute truth' or 'absolute truths.' We found that the special object of philosophy was truth, i.e. of course, absolute truth. Thus philosophy and religion have the same object. I know from other sources that this is Prof. Vera's opinion, and I have nothing to say against it. On the contrary, it renders it possible for religion to merge itself in philosophy. It is hard to see, therefore, what Prof. Vera is combatting when he says: 'Now Mr. Davidson says there is no such thing as an absolute religion; adding, as a proof, I suppose, that religion as it draws nearer to the absolute ceases to be religion and becomes philosophy. Well, I say that, if there be no absolute religion, there is no Absolute at all, not even the Absolute as the special object of philosophy, and that the Universe is made of fortuitous elements, of accidents.' This is a most terrible result to draw from such a harmless premiss. No doubt, I am refuted when Prof. Vera comes down with a dogmatic 'I say,' and, no doubt, if everything is not absolute, nothing is. 'How absolute the knave is!' says Hamlet. Of course, he meant: if there is no absolute knave, there is no absolute at all, and the Universe is made up of fortuitous elements, of accidents. Perhaps 't were to consider too curiously to consider so,' and so Prof. Vera apparently once thought. In an essay of his, entitled *Amour et Philosophie*, he says: 'The proper object of religion * * * is the absolute. * * * But if on this side religion is infinite, it also falls back on the other into the sphere of the finite. * * * It is this contradiction, and the urgent desire to remove it, that elevate thought and being above religion, and produce the third and fairest child of love. * * * This child, I need hardly say, is philosophy. * * * *Fides quærit intellectum*: Faith endeavors to understand itself by understanding the object which it receives and on which it feeds. These words mark the natural and necessary passage from religion to philosophy. They show that faith is not satisfied with itself, and that it is not satisfied because it has feelings and glimpses of a region above it, which it cannot reach. * * * Both (religion and philosophy) contemplate the same object, the Absolute Being, principle and end of the Universe, but each contemplates it with its own eyes. * * * Consequently, the difference between religion and philosophy is the difference between believing and understanding.' Compare this with what he says in his book on Strauss: 'We maintain that the Christian religion, in so far as religion, is the absolute religion, inasmuch as it is, on the one hand, the unity of all the religions, and that, on the other, its principle is the one which most nearly approaches philosophy, so that Christianity is virtually philosophy.' If this is not precisely the same thing that I affirmed, and Prof. Vera objects to, I don't know what it is. Christianity, the absolute religion even on his own showing, is virtually philosophy, and it is because it is virtually philosophy that it is the absolute religion. But I think I can prove to him, out of his own mouth, that all religions are absolute, and that, therefore, Christianity has no special superiority in this respect.

"For my assertion, 'there is no absolute religion virtually or otherwise,' he substitutes 'there is nothing absolute in religion,' making this, instead of the other, the basis of his reply. Now although these assertions are very far from being equivalent, and although I should never have dreamt of making the latter, still Prof. Vera must be too fair a writer willingly to distort another man's opinions: and so I must assume that he thought the two were equivalent. To him, therefore, the fact that there is something absolute in religion makes a religion absolute. But, now, let us turn again to his *Amour et Philosophie*. On p. 98, we read: 'The proper object of religion, and of all religions, even of the religions of nature, is the absolute.' It follows from this at once that all religions are absolute, and that Christianity has nothing special in this respect."

Professor Davidson concludes his reply by quoting the passage in which Professor Vera speaks of the gradual approach of religion to philosophy

and of the supposed conversion of a polygon into a circle by increasing its number of sides, and remarks:

“The argument, of course, must be: Because a polygon cannot become a circle, religion cannot become philosophy. But a regular polygon of an infinite number of sides is a circle; and when religion grasps the absolute, it is philosophy. And not only so, but the nearer the number of the sides of a polygon comes to being infinite, the nearer does the polygon come to being a circle: so likewise, the more nearly religion succeeds in grasping the Absolute, the more nearly is it philosophy. Thus, it seems to me, Prof. Vera’s illustration goes to prove the very opposite of what he intended it to prove.”

ED.

What is Truth?

This famous question of the Roman crucifier has so generally been considered a crushing finale to all energetic assertions, that it may be well enough to examine once whether this its very character of unanswerableness results not from the extreme silliness of the question. When we ask what something *is*, the inquiry must either relate to an actual object of sensuous perception, in which case the answer can be more or less readily and perfectly gathered from experience; or, secondly, to the relation of a relation (or of a thought) to our mind, in which case that question what that relation *is* turns more properly into that, whether the word chosen to express it is the one by general consent established for that purpose. Hence, in the first instance, we may not, and indeed never are, able to say what such a thing—for example, the loadstone—*is*, since all we can say of the loadstone now, as constituting its *is*, embraces simply the qualities which the loadstone has as yet exhibited; but it may possess innumerable other qualities that will become manifest only in the future. But in the latter case it must be absolutely possible to give a complete answer; and if, then, a dispute arises, it can be only a word-dispute, to be settled by common usage, or the dictionary. For those words that designate not external or sensuously perceptible objects, but pure relations, have surely not sprung into existence by themselves. They were made, made by rational beings; and, as they are not signs of what those beings empirically perceived, can be signs only of what they had not empirically in their mind—that is, of phenomena in the intellect, relations to the intellect, or *a priori* conceptions—whatever expression seems best suited. But as such conceptions they can be neither changed nor amplified. That which the word “causality” meant when first framed, it means now, no more and no less, and for all rational beings. When you ask, therefore, what “causality” (for instance) is, the answer is, “It is merely a word, and nothing else at all.” There is no *is* really about it; it has no qualities to be empirically discovered; we have simply to ascertain whether for a particular connecting or relating of external things in the intellect the word “causality” is the one that has by common consent been selected to signify such relation.

Now, the question of Pontius Pilate is precisely of this character. “Truth” *is* simply a word; it is no external thing to be seen, heard, eat, or drank; but the designation of a relation: it has no existence to which we might repair and examine some of its qualities, but has been made out of the sounds of language, by rational beings, to be the sign for a certain pheno-